

Thomas Hincks's *A History of the British Marine Polyzoa*: 1879 or 1880? Confirmation of publication date

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ABSTRACT: Both of the two volumes of Thomas Hincks's *A History of the British Marine Polyzoa* bear the date of 1880 on their title-pages. Nevertheless, the year 1880 as the true date of publication might be questionable, because most of the plates in volume 2 are dated, and the date given there is 1879. However, internal evidence in volume 1 indicates that it cannot have been published in 1879. Corroboration is provided by external evidence that shows both volumes were published together, between 17 and 28 February 1880. Hence, the date of 1879 on the plates is apparently their date of printing, rather than publication.

KEYWORDS: Alfred T. Hollick, British Isles, Bryozoa, John Van Voorst, Polyzoa, publication dates, Thomas Hincks.

INTRODUCTION

Much research has been carried out on the sometimes misleading publication dates to be found on title-pages of works produced by the Victorian London publisher John Van Voorst (1804–1898) (Williams, 2014, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c). Hence, the cautious taxonomist or bibliographer, whether zoologist, botanist or palaeontologist, would be wise to regard the purported date of any Van Voorst publication with some circumspection.

Thomas Hincks (1818–1899) was the author of two Van Voorst monographs, both published in two volumes: *A History of the British Marine Hydrozoa* (Hincks, 1868 [1869]) and *A History of the British Marine Polyzoa* (Hincks, 1880a). Both the text-volume and the plates-volume of the former (referred to hereinafter as *British Marine Hydrozoa*) were printed on either demy or royal sheets. Suspicion was initially raised about the verity of the 1868 title-page dates because each of the plates in demy copies is dated 1869, although the plates in royal copies are not dated. Thus, it was subsequently established that, notwithstanding the date printed on its title-pages, *British Marine Hydrozoa* was actually published in 1869 (Williams, 2018c).

Like *British Marine Hydrozoa*, Hincks's other two-volume monograph, *A History of the British Marine Polyzoa*¹ (hereinafter *British Marine Polyzoa*) was also published as separate volumes of text and plates on alternative paper-sizes of demy or royal. Again, dates on plates do not tally with dates on the title-pages. Although both title-pages are dated “MDCCCLXXX” (see Figure 1), most of the plates bear a date of “MDCCCLXXIX” (see Figure 2).

¹ This phylum of marine invertebrates is now known as the Bryozoa.

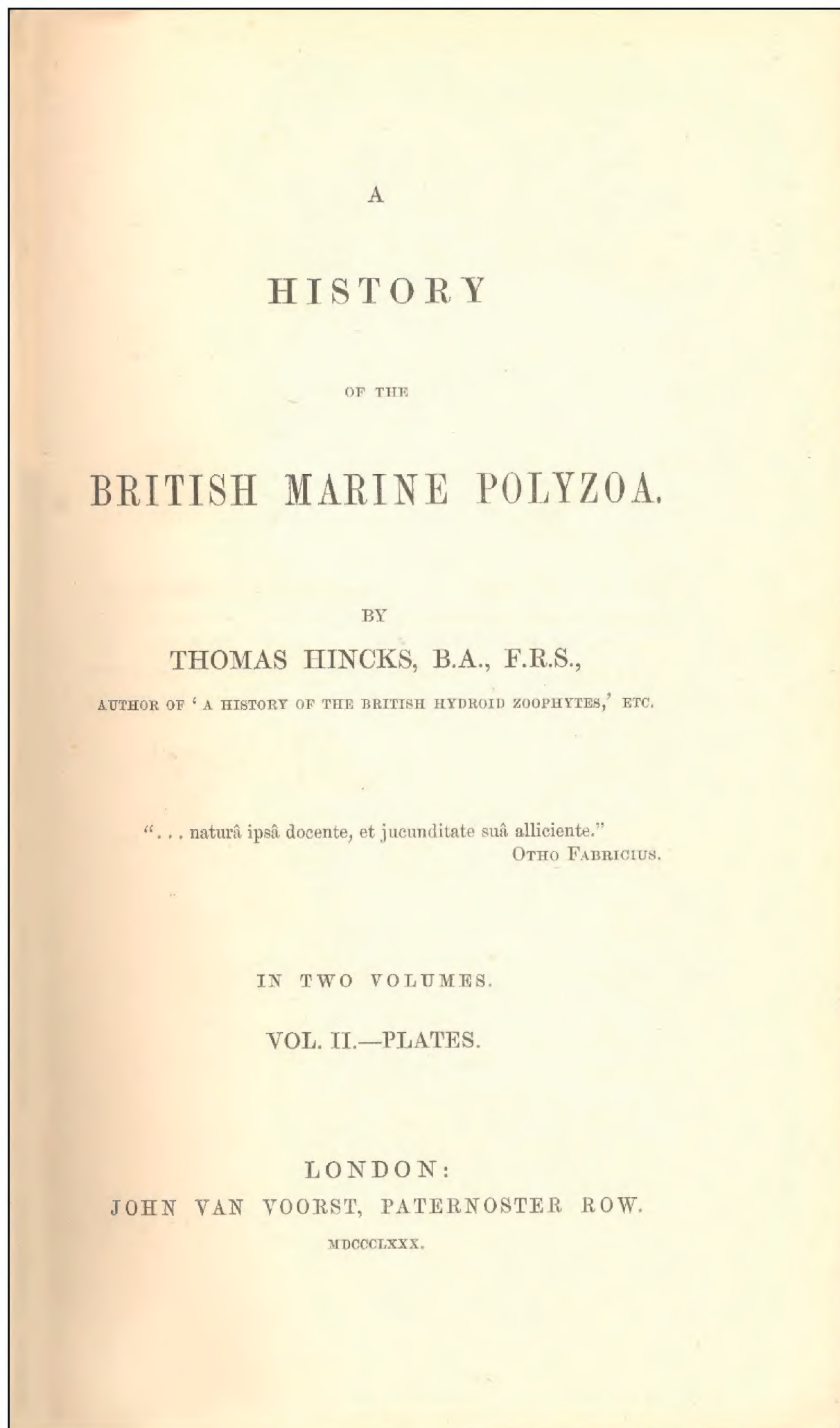


Figure 1 Title-page (dated MDCCCLXXX) of volume 2 of Thomas Hincks's *A History of the British Marine Polyzoa* (Photo: R. B. Williams, 2018).

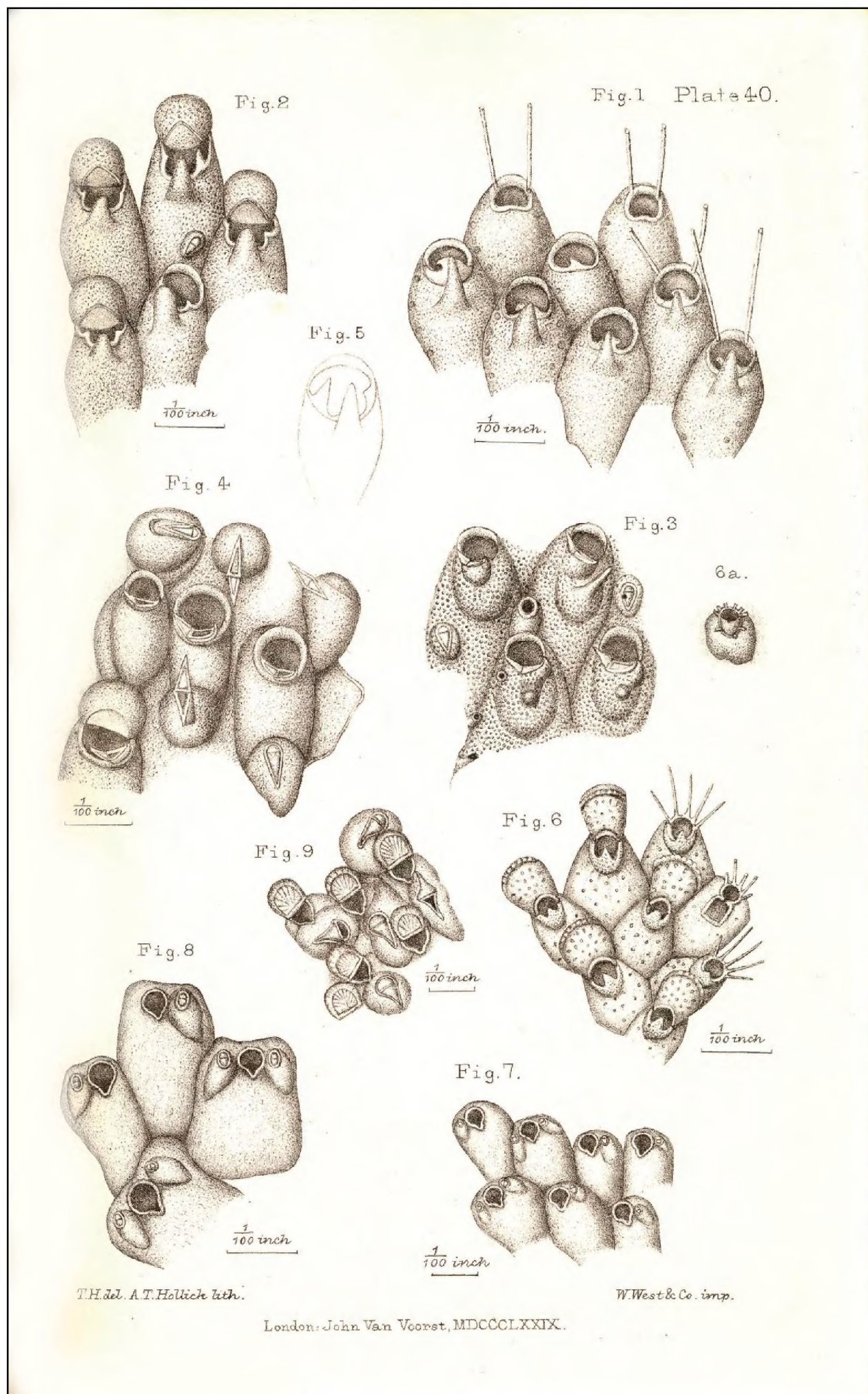


Figure 2 Plate 40 (dated MDCCCLXXIX) of volume 2 of Thomas Hincks's *A History of the British Marine Polyzoa* (Photo: R. B. Williams, 2018).

Van Voorst is known to have previously issued books dated the year after that of actual publication, for instance *Actinologia Britannica* (Gosse, 1860 [1859]) and the second edition of *The Micrographic Dictionary* (Griffith and Henfrey, 1860 [1859]) (see Williams, 2017a: 58). This practice was, in fact, not uncommon among Victorian publishers (Jackson, 1881; Sonnenschein, 1891).² Hence, in view of the 1879 dating of plates, it is quite feasible that *British Marine Polyzoa* could have been published in that year, rather than in the year 1880 printed on its title-pages, although I am not aware of any published suggestion to that effect. Therefore, that possibility was duly investigated.

EVIDENCE FOR PUBLICATION IN 1880

In a nomenclatural index to *British Marine Polyzoa*, Ryland (1969) listed every species and variety described by Hincks in that work, together with the scientific name currently recommended or generally accepted. Although Ryland mentioned no taxa published in 1880 that might have challenged Hincks's precedence, it is perhaps still surprising that he did not question the date of 1879 on the plates, nor make any attempt to ascertain a more exact date within 1880 for the publication of *British Marine Polyzoa*.

In his preface to volume 1 (page [ix]), Hincks generously credited the individuals involved in the production of this monograph:

In the preparation of this work I have had the cordial cooperation of the Publisher, to whom British Natural History owes so much, and who is still true to the honourable traditions of his house. The Plates bear witness to Mr. Hollick's admirable accuracy, and to his power of rendering the minutest detail with perfect fidelity. It is also right that Mr. Evans and Mr. Kirchner should have the credit of the Woodcuts, which do justice to their subjects.

VOLUME 1

It is easily established that volume 1, at least, could not have been published in 1879. On page cxxxiii is a reference to a publication by Waters (1880), which was published in January 1880, although no day is stated. Furthermore, in a subsequent paper, Hincks (1880b: 70) wrote: "The classification employed will be that which I have adopted in my 'History of the Marine Polyzoa,' so far as it applies". The publication date of that paper is given as July 1880. Hence, a very approximate preliminary estimation is that *British Marine Polyzoa* must have been published at some time between 1 January and 31 July 1880.

VOLUME 2

Volume 2 of *British Marine Polyzoa* contains 83 plates. The original drawings of plates 1–82 were made by Hincks himself, and drawn on the stones by Alfred T. Hollick

² Jackson (1881: xviii–xix) writes in his *Guide to the Literature of Botany*, "In taking titles from the various publishers' journals, there must always be some risk towards the end of each year, of giving a date which may differ by an unit from that on the title-page of the book itself; this liability arises from the trade-practice of dating forward ...". Furthermore, in *The Best Books*, Sonnenschein (1891: ii) notes that "In certain catalogues ... dates recorded are those in which the books *appeared*; these—owing chiefly to the pernicious system of post-dating books—are not necessarily the dates given on the title-pages ...".

(1843–1910),³ as indicated by the rubric “T.H. del. A.T.Hollick lith.” at the bottom-left of each plate. The lithographic stones were printed (see bottom right of plates) mostly by “W. West & C^o. imp.”; or the succeeding company “West, Newman & C^o. imp.” (only plates 15, 24, 27, 28, 31, 44, 45, 50–52, 54–57, 59–64, 68, 71, 72).⁴ The attributions for plate 83, from a different source, are “After Barrois & Nitsche.” and “F. Huth, Lith^r. Edin^r.”.

All the plates except 14, 16, 25, 31, 37, 63 and 83 bear, at the bottom centre, Van Voorst’s imprint and a date (Figure 2). That date is “MDCCCLXXIX” except for plate 38, which is dated “MDCCCXXIX”, obviously in error. No other internal dating evidence is printed in volume 2. However, external evidence indicates that the two volumes of *British Marine Polyzoa* were published simultaneously, for instance in reviews in *The Popular Science Review* (Anonymous, 1880a) and *The Zoologist* (Anonymous, 1880b). Corroboration is provided in *The Publishers’ Circular* (Low, 1880: 172) and *The English Catalogue of Books* (Low, 1882: 217).⁵ That being the case, the publication-date of both volumes must have been 1880.

REFINEMENT OF THE YEAR-DATE

Since *British Marine Polyzoa* was definitely published in 1880, further refinement of this year-date may be sought. The originally estimated range of 1 January to 31 July 1880 may certainly be narrowed. Thus, the review in *The Popular Science Review* (Anonymous, 1880a) is in the April issue (probably about 1 April, that being a quarterly journal). However, the legal-deposit volumes (on royal paper⁶) of *British Marine Polyzoa* in the British Library (shelf-mark “(B) FU 63”) were accessioned rather later, on “24 MA 80” (= 24 May 1880).⁷ The same date is stamped on the verso of every plate in volume 2.

Crucially, however, the book is listed under “NEW WORKS PUBLISHED FROM FEBRUARY 17 to 28” in *The Publishers’ Circular* (Low, 1880: 168). Therefore, both volumes of *British Marine Polyzoa* were without doubt published between 17 and 28 February 1880, and the 1879 dating of the plates is apparently that of their printing, rather than their publication.

³ See Lang & Santiago-Blay (2012: 249–251) for biographical details of Hollick.

⁴ See Paisley (2017) for some historical notes on the West-family lithographical printing-firms.

⁵ In *The Best Books*, Sonnenschein (1891: 544) inexplicably records the volumes’ publication dates as 1880 and 1882, but that is clearly an error.

⁶ It is perhaps surprising that Van Voorst chose to supply a more expensive royal copy, rather than a demy copy, for legal deposit. However, this present instance is by no means unique. He had previously provided royal legal-deposit copies of Edward Forbes’s *A History of British Starfishes* (see Williams, 2014: 6), George Johnston’s second edition of *A History of British Zoophytes* (see Williams, 2018a: 163) and Hincks’s *A History of the British Hydroid Zoophytes* (see Williams, 2018c: 5). As in the case of *British Hydroid Zoophytes*, the lateness of the legal deposit of *British Marine Polyzoa* is deemed to be of no significance.

⁷ The date-stamps used by the British Museum after 1849 are confusing because of the two-letter abbreviations of the months. Thus, “MH” or “MR” may stand for March; “MA” or “MY” for May; “JU” for June; and “JY” for July (Parie Watterson, Rare Books and Music Reference Team, British Library, pers. comm., 28 September 2018).

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